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"There She Is:" a change for the worse

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"There She Is:" a change for the worse

I suppose change in our culture is a must, else social critics soon would label ours a stagnant society.

Ideas will change, attitudes should change and people must change to adequately approach the

Fine Focus Tom St. Amand

problems and events of the future.

Until Saturday the argument for change had my full support. My advocacy ebbed that weekend evening when I watched 45 minutes of the 57th Miss America Pageant and witnessed unimagined change.

Most of the contestants were no different than those of previous years. They still had a few ridiculous remarks, as in the case of Miss Alabama: "Being a mathematics major, someday I may work on the space shuttle."

She was all smiles and patriotism, but a non-thinker just the same.

The talent competition also was pretty much the same as I remember it from glimpses of past pageants, but signs of technology did creep into the show. One contestant had judges clapping and foot-stomping with her rendition of "The Orange Blossom Special" played on an electric fiddle, and another woman needed an electric piano for a

rowdy ragtime tune. What ever happened to the sincere sound of a flute or an instrument without a plug?

Even the announcers' sing-song comments sounded like recordings of last year and twenty years ago: "Kimberly's been dancing professionally since she was nine."

So what's changed, you ask? The whole show's changed.

It began when Bert Parks was fired two years ago and actor Ron Ely assumed the role of master of ceremonies. This year Ely is gone and talk show host Gary Collins filled the vacant spot. Collins may draw more viewers with his recognized TV name, but he's just not Bert.

The changes continued when "There She Is," the song made famous by the Miss America Pageant, was dropped in favor of "Loo At Her." Devotees of this happening were stripped of their anthem because the author of "There She Is" wanted too much money for his song this year. profiteers seem more charitable? Does it hide the fact that all-around beauty and talent are giving way to more and more "T and A" every year?

As I understand it, Miss America used to draw admiration and respect wherever she went. I heard yesterday that the new Miss America is coming to Portland via PeopleExpress.

Change bothers me when it comes in this form. It's okay for styles, fads and ideas to change, but why should tradition have to change as well? I

used to get a kick out of watching the long-running annual shows like the Academy Awards and the pageant. I don't watch anymore because I can't handle the glitter.



One good change did come out this year's pageant. We now have our first black Miss America in Vanessa Williams of Millwood, New York. Blacks weren't even allowed to enter during the first three decades of the pageant. Thank God for changes, sometimes. Thank NBC for nothing.

Tom St. Amand is a senior journalism major from Kennebunkport, Maine.